

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 PC-01 IO-13 HA-05 /111 W

-----074888 051257Z /43

R 051045Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9618

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1472

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, MR, FR, SS

SUBJ: SAHARA WATCH: POLISARIO ALIVE AND KICKING

1. FOLLOWING SERIES OF MINOR RAIDS IN MAURITANIA IN MID-MAY POLISARIO IS BELIEVED TO HAVE ATTEMPTED SABOTAGE OF ZOUERATE-NOUADHIBOU RAILROAD. AMBUSH FAILED WHEN SNIM STOPPED RUNNING TRAINS FOR FOUR-DAY PERIOD. ON MAY 26, MAURITANIAN FORCES DISCOVERED EXPLOSIVES ON RAIL LINE. THESE APPARENTLY FAILED TO DETONATE WHEN TRAIN PASSED OVER THEM. THERE ARE RUMORS AROUND TOWN THAT POLISARIO COLUMN PENETRATED AS FAR AS BENI CHAAB 130 KILOMETERS NORTHEAST OF NOUAKCHOTT. THIS REPORT LIKE THAT OF ATTACK ON BIR MOGHREIN REPORTED TWO-THREE DAYS AGO, UNCONFIRMED.

2. WELL INFORMED SOURCES HERE NOTE THAT POLISARIO IS HEAVILY DUG IN AT OUM DREIGA IN MOROCCAN PORTION OF SAHARA AND ALSO
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MAINTAINS SOME SORT OF BASE NEAR AUSERT IN MAURITANIAN PORTION (TIRIS EL GHARBIA). MOROCCANS SAID TO HAVE MOUNTED MAJOR OPERATION AGAINST OUM DREIGA CONCENTRATION IN APRIL, FORCEING POLISARIO TO ABANDON AREA TEMPORARILY. HOWEVER, GUERRILLAS NOW SAID TO BE BACK THERE IN FORCE AND TO BE ABLE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST LESS THAN FULL SCALE ATTACKS. MAY 4 JAGUAR BOMBARDMENT OF OUM DREIGA APPARENTLY FAILED TO DIS-

LODGE POLISARIO. THIS IS FIRST TIME THAT THERE HAS BEEN
SOLID INFORMATION OF JAGUARS STRIKING OUTSIDE MAURITANIA.

3. FRENCH AIR FORCE PRESENCE IN MAURITANIA REMAINS EVIDENT.
ON MAY 27, MEMBER OF EMBASSY STAFF OBSERVED THREE JAGUARS
AT NOUADHIBOU. AIRCRAFT REMAINED THERE THROUGH-
OUT STAFF MEMBER'S STAY MAY 27 INSTEAD OF ARRIVING ANDLEAVING
QUICKLY AS IS USUALLY THE CASE. DESPITE MAURITANIAN ARMY'S
IMPROVED CAPACITY FOR PATROLLING, OBSERVERS HERE
AGREE THAT, WITHOUT FRENCH AIR FORCEDETER-
RENT, MILITARY SITUATION WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR MAURI-
TANIANS. DUNBAR

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